

Message Text

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ACTION SCSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9867

UNCLAS MADRID 3003

SCA/SCS/OBIT

EUR/WE

E.O. N/A
TAGS: CASC, SP
SUBJECT: TENERIFE AIR DISASTER/REMAINS AND PERSONAL EFFECTS OF
VICTIMS

1. PREDICTABLY, THE EMBASSY HAS HAD A NUMBER OF TELEPHONE CALLS FROM THE U.S. FROM ATTORNEYS REPRESENTING VICTIMS OF THE CRASH AND OTHERS REQUESTING INFORMATION CONCERNING EVENTS AT TENERIFE FOLLOWING THE AIR DISASTER. MOST RECENTLY EMBASSY RECEIVED TELEPHONE CALL FROM MR. JEFFREY WALK, ATTORNEY AT 350 FIFTH AVE., NEW YORK, WHO STATED HE REPRESENTED FAMILY OF VICTIM MICHAEL TORRECH AND OTHERS. MR. WALK POSED SEVERAL QUESTIONS REGARDING THE PREPARATION OF THE REMAINS OF THE PAA VICTIMS, PARTICULARLY WHETHER ANY ORGANS REMOVED FROM ANY OF THE BODIES EITHER DURING WORK OF FORENSIC TEAM OR BY LOCAL MORTICIANS WHO EMBALMED REMAINS. HE ALSO ASKED VERY POINTED QUESTIONS REGARDING PERSON OR PERSONS WHO MADE DECISION TO EMBALM REMAINS. AS WALK'S QUESTIONS CLEARLY REQUIRED DEFINITIVE ANSWERS, HE REQUESTED TO MAKE THEM MATTER OF RECORD IN LETTER TO EMBASSY WHICH WE WILL ANSWER ALONG FOLLOWING LINES UNLESS DEPARTMENT PERCEIVES OBJECTION.

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2. WITH REGARD TO REMOVAL OF ORGANS FROM REMAINS OF PAA VICTIMS BY MORTICIANS AT LOS RODEOS IN TENERIFE, EMBASSY WAS INFORMED BY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FUNERAL HOMES WHICH EMBALMED REMAINS (THERE WERE THREE FUNERAL HOMES INVOLVED) THAT REMAINS WERE EMBALMED BY INJECTION AND ONLY VISCERA REMOVED. EMBASSY UNABLE TO COMMENT ON WHAT PROCESSES WERE EMPLOYED BY MEMBERS OF THE FBI FORENSIC

TEAM WHO SOUGHT TO IDENTIFY VICTIMS. WE THEREFORE SUGGESTS
YOU COMMUNICATE WITH FBI CONCERNING THIS MATTER.

3. CONCERNING THE EMBALMMENT OF THE PAA AND KLM VICTIMS,
A MEETING, PRESIDED OVER BY SPANISH MILITARY JUDGE OF
THE TENERIFE COURT OF JURISDICTION WAS HELD AT THE
AIRPORT AT 16:30 ON MARCH 28 AND ATTENDED BY PAA AND KLM
OFFICIALS, SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE FBI FORENSIC TEAM, THE
EMBASSY TEAM LEADER AS WELL AS A REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE NETHERLANDS EMBASSY IN MADRID, NTSB AUTHORITIES
AND A REPRESENTATIVE FROM ONE OF TENERIFE'S FUNERAL
HOMES. THE PRESIDING JUDGE STATED THAT CREMATION OF THE
REMAINS WAS POSSIBLE, BUT NOT PROBABLE AS SPANISH LAW
REQUIRED NOTARIZED STATEMENTS OF NOK FOR CREMATION OR
SOME EVIDENCE THAT THE DECEDENTS WHILE LIVING HAD
REQUESTED SUCH AND TIME FRAME PRECLUDED RECEIPT OF SUCH
DOCUMENTATION. THE SECOND OPTION WAS MASS BURIAL AS
SOON AS POSSIBLE, BUT THIS WAS RULED OUT IMMEDIATELY BY
ALL PRESENT IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNDERSTANDABLE
DESIRE OF THE NOK OF THE VICTIMS TO HAVE REMAINS
IDENTIFIED AND RETURNED TO U.S. OR NETHERLANDS FOR
DISPOSITION, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE. IN VIEW OF THE LAW OF
SPAIN WHICH REQUIRES THAT HUMAN REMAINS BE BURIED WITHIN
48 HOURS IF UNEMBALMED, AND APPROXIMATELY 24 HOURS HAD
ALREADY PASSED, RESULT OF MEETING WAS THE DECISION ON
PART OF THOSE PRESENT, INCLUDING EMBASSY TEAM OBER,
THAT EMBALMMENT SHOULD PROCEED WITHOUT DELAY. PAA AND
KLM SUBSEQUENTLY ENTERED INTO AGREEMENT WITH A
REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE THREE TENERIFE FUNERAL HOMES,
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WHO PERFORMED MORTUARY SERVICES, AND AIRLINES ASSUMED
RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL CHARGES IN CONNECTION WITH
PREPARATION OF REMAINS.

4. EMBASSY ADVISED BY OFFICIALS OF TENERIFE COURT BY
TELEPHONE THAT SOME OF THE PAA PERSONAL EFFECTS WHICH
WERE IN THEIR CUSTODY BECAUSE THEY WERE MIXED WITH KLM
EFFECTS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS BELONGING TO SPECIFIC
PASSENGERS ON PAA FLIGHT. THE NAMES OF THE INDIVIDUALS
WHOSE EFFECTS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED NOT KNOWN BUT
EMBASSY EXPECTS TO RECEIVE LETTER FROM COURT WITH FULL
DETAILS VERY SOON AT WHICH TIME ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE
MADE TO HAVE CONSULAR OFFICER TAKE POSSESSION. STABLER

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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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